The RedBird Word

Volume 36 December No. 4

'Twas the Night before Christmas when all through the halls, no creatures were stirring; they were all at the malls!

Alton High School
2200 College Ave.
Alton, Illinois 62002

Special someones, stars, and chemistry homework, combat stress problems

Sarahjay Whitney, co-editor and coverstory editor

When was the last time you counted the stars in the sky above your back yard? It seems that as we get older, we let school, jobs, significant others and what ever else drag us down in a whirlpool of stress. What ever happened to our carefree days of grade school where the most important thing we worried about was choosing between a bologna or a peanut butter 'n jelly sandwich for lunch.

Just this morning while walking to class, two of my good friends were lamenting about how many college applications they still have to complete. Another mentioned with a laugh that she might take a college day just to fill out college applications. Seniors aren't the only ones with pre-holiday stress. It affects every high school student in some way.

Sometimes stress is a good thing. While I was driving home from play practice with my sister, she exasperatedly asked for help on her chemistry research project. Stress like my sister's helps the person to get his or her assignments done and turned in on time.

But sometimes, stress can be a bad thing. It doesn't take much to cause everything to explode and blow out of proportion. During the last week of November, I had this happen to me. Between RBW stress, Orchestra stress, homework stress, college stress, and not-seeing-the-boyfriend stress I burst into tears right in front of my Discussion and Debate partner. How embarrassing!

Several kleenexes later, after I pulled my self together, he told me to go hang out with my boyfriend that evening and just forget about everything. He also said that he would take care of our homework for that evening, and not to worry about a thing. That was the best advice anyone had given me the entire day.

If we could all remember to not lose our amazement of the world around us, then life wouldn't seem so stressful. Everyone has their own way of coping with stress. It could be anything from hanging out with your special someone, (like mine) reading a book, hanging out with your friends, or locking your bedroom door and jamming on your guitar till 3 o'clock Saturday morning.

If you're at a loss for what to do, just go outside on a clear winter night and count as many stars as you can see. If all else fails, you'll be reminded of the beauty of the earth and hopefully get a sense that the future has great things in store for you.

Ps. There are 47 stars shining down on my backyard.

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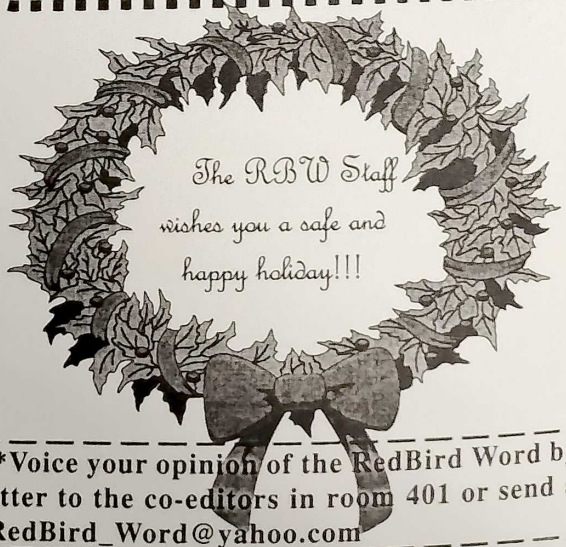
Mission Statement of RBW

We strive to present the student body with information that is entertaining, diverse and professional.



***Voice your opinion of the RedBird Word by sending a letter to the co-editors in room 401 or send an e-mail at RedBird_Word@yahoo.com**

A tribute to the boys

by Courtney Schien, managing editor

Juniors Marco Riddlespriger and Alex Weber were killed in a car accident Tuesday, December 19. The two had been completing job applications and were on their way home when they lost control of the car and crashed. Weber was killed instantly while Riddlespriger was airlifted to a St. Louis hospital. He died the following morning.

Teacher Annice Brave said, "Alex was a sweet gentle spirit who is certainly missed by his teachers and peers. I didn't know Marco, but from the outpouring of love from students here at school, I know he must have been wonderful."

The students of Alton High hung posters in the hall. The posters were filled with words of encouragement to the families and were featured at the joint visitation.

May they rest in peace

by Jelis Riddlespriger

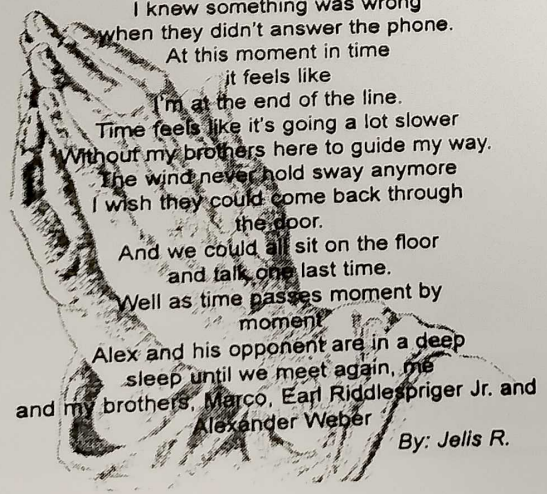
Alex and Marco loved sports. Their favorite sports were basketball, track and field, bowling, wrestling, and boxing. Marco was a member of Alton High's bowling and track teams. He loved track and was hoping to go to state this year. He loved track as much as Alex loved wrestling and boxing. Although Alex was not a member of any of Alton High's teams, he was very active in sports.

They were best friends. You could call them brothers. They were as close as friends can ever get.

I'm sure they would like for everybody to keep their heads up during this tragedy. They will be remembered as young men who were very sweet, active in sports, both had cute smiles, and both were always willing to do what they could to help out. They will stay in our hearts forever and will never be forgotten.

~May They Rest in Peace~

Remembering My Brothers



The wind blowing in the night,
something just doesn't feel right.
I knew something was wrong
when they didn't answer the phone.
At this moment in time
it feels like
I'm at the end of the line.
Time feels like it's going a lot slower
Without my brothers here to guide my way.
The wind never hold sway anymore
I wish they could come back through
the door.
And we could all sit on the floor
and talk one last time.
Well as time passes moment by
moment
Alex and his opponent are in a deep
sleep until we meet again, me
and my brothers, Marco, Earl Riddlespriger Jr. and
Alexander Weber

By: Jelis R.

JanuaryJollies

Jan. 7- Biology Club	
room 313	7:30 a.m.
Minority Excellence	
Library	3:30 p.m.
Fellowship of Christian Athletes	
room 512	7 p.m.
Jan. 8- National Honor Society	
Library	7:30 a.m.
Upward Bound	
room 114	3 p.m.
Jan. 9- Amnesty International	
room 515	3 p.m.
WYSE	
Library	7:30 a.m.
Theater Fest- University of Illinois	
Jan. 10- Theater Fest- University of Illinois	
Jan. 14- Minority Excellence	
Library	3:30 p.m.
Jan. 15- National Honor Society	
Library	7:30 a.m.
Upward Bound	
room 114	3 p.m.
Jan. 16- Amnesty International	
room 515	3 p.m.
Jan. 20- NO SCHOOL	
Jan. 21- Minority Excellence	
Library	3:30 p.m.
Fellowship of Christian Athletes	
room 512	7 p.m.
Jan. 22- National Honor Society	
Library	7:30 a.m.
Upward Bound	
room 114	3 p.m.
Jan. 23- Amnesty International	
room 515	3 p.m.
WYSE	
Gym	3 p.m.
Jan. 24 & 25- Winter Play	
The Man Who Came to Dinner	
AHS Auditorium	8 p.m.
Jan. 27- Dunlope Music Scholarship Auditions	
Jan. 28- Minority Excellence	
Library	3:30 p.m.
Orchestra Concert	
Calvary Baptist Church	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 29- National Honor Society	
Library	7:30 a.m.
Upward Bound	
room 114	3 p.m.
Jan. 30- Amnesty International	
room 515	3 p.m.
Jan. 31- Senior Awards Assembly	
IMEA All State	
Peoria	

** This Calendar is subject to change without notice*

Alumnus gives back

Drew Mitchell

Alton High school alumnus, Chris Mitchell, is making plans to improve AHS computer labs. Mitchell, 21, is a Software-Design Engineer-in-Test for Microsoft's Exchange Server.

Mitchell has decided to donate a generous amount of hardware and software. The hardware that will be contributed is a Macintosh-compatible Microsoft Office 2001. Two of the AHS computer labs will be directly benefited by the donation.

"I decided that Alton High was the place for my donation because most of the organizations in Seattle [where Mitchell resides] have Microsoft software thanks to other generous employees. I've seen very few donations come to Alton High. I feel it's only right to give back to the place that gave me so much. With this donation, I'm able to help my alma mater and positively impact the computer skills of the AHS students," Mitchell said.

The computer labs in rooms 516 and 215 will be immediately affected by the donation. These rooms are considered high priority considering the operations that they run throughout the school day. Multimedia A and B classes meet in room 516. The curriculi in these classes demand computers with more memory. Journalism 1 classes convene in room 215. The iMac's in that room also have a lack of memory.

Multimedia teacher, Mrs. Blackard will be one of the teachers receiving the donation.

"It's amazing he's done so well. It is great that he is giving back to the school where he grew up. This is a much needed donation. We are fortunate to have someone who understands our needs and has put their time and money into improvements back in the school," said Mrs. Blackard.

Rathgeb is a standout student and racer

Jeffrey Hartnett

Senior Ron Rathgeb may look like a regular mechanic, but last year he was the record holder for the a three-time winner of student of the month at J.B. Johnson Center. In his spare time, he helps out at his dad's auto body shop and participates in drag races at the Gateway International Raceway.

Rathgeb is in the Automotive Mechanics class at J.B.J. The class is taught by Jeff Warren. Rathgeb's extensive knowledge of cars really helps him out in class. "I was holding a wrench at age two," Rathgeb said.

Rathgeb and his father also race cars at Gateway International Speedway. Rathgeb even raced before he had a license. He races a junior drag car that runs faster than a stock small block V-8 car in the quarter mile when he was only twelve years old. By the time Ron got his license, he had built a 383 V-8 Buick Skylark which he also races at the track. His dad races a Chevy Nova. Realizing his son's gift of racing, he conceded, "I love to drive that car but Ron drives it better."

Rathgeb also has a helpful attitude. "He helps me work on my Mustang whenever I need it," said senior Todd Applegate. "If I ask Ron a question about cars, he either knows [the answer] or will find out."

After graduation, Rathgeb plans on going to Ranken Technical College to improve his automotive skills. "With the potential he has he can do anything in the auto industry," said Mr. Warren.

How much is that doggie in the window?

Christmas is the time to buy a pet for the family, and the 5A's Humane Society is overflowing with cats and dogs.

Andrea Zimmermann, co-editor and features editor

As three tiny shepard mix puppies huddle in a corner, lines of people gather outside of the 5A's Animal Shelter in hopes of adopting a dog for Christmas. Jason Bull, an employee at the shelter, wholeheartedly agrees that Christmas is the best time to adopt puppies and kittens.

The 5A's are currently overflowing with animals. "We are at full capacity right now. The 5A's is a no-kill shelter. This means there are no dogs or cats put to sleep because no one would adopt them. Many agencies send dogs here because they know they are in good hands,"Bull said.

All dogs and cats ready for adoption come with three booster shots including a shot for worms. The shelter requires that prospective owners have a fence around their yard. They also provide a coupon for the families to get their new animal spayed or nuetered. That is also a requirement of the shelter. The adoption fee for a dog is $50 and $30 for a cat.

"We are constantly busy with customers and new animals,"said Bull. "As soon as someone adopts a dog or cat, within the hour a new animal occupies its cage."

The 5A's are open everyday except major holidays from 11 a.m. to four p.m. To look at more cute puppies and kittens waiting to be adopted, go to *www.petfinder.org*. This website will give listings and pictures of animals from area and national shelters.

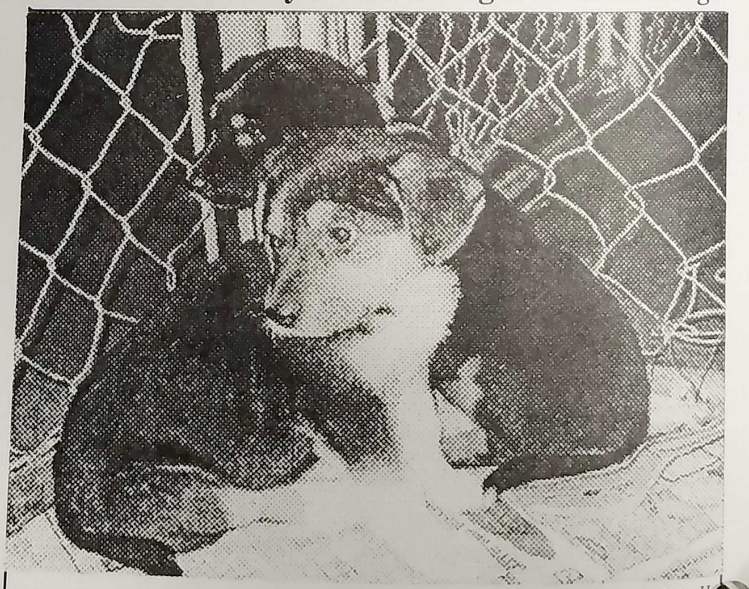


Photo by Rickey Millitello

These shepard mix puppies are ready and waiting for the perfect family to adopt them for Christmas.

Seniors share what freedom means to them

Christina Sidwell and Kristin Hammond, reporter

What is freedom's obligation? To some Americans it is abiding by the laws of our country. To others it is enforcing education, but to seniors, Jody Cox, Sarah Whitney and Kate Plunkett, it means many different things.

This year's Voice of Democracy National Audio Essay Scholarship Competition, gave the girls a chance to express there beliefs in the form of a recorded speech.

The contest, which is sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, is held every year with a different theme. Students this year were asked to record a three to five minute speech on their interpretation of "Freedom's Obligation." Three winners were chosen from Alton High School. First place winner was Sarah Whitney, who received a $300 savings bond. Second place winner was Kate Plunkett, who received a $150 savings bond, and the third place winner from AHS was Jody Cox, who received a $100 savings bond.

The winners were announced on November 26 at the VFW, and each girl had their picture taken with prominent figures of the local VFW. The three area high schools that participated in the contest were: Alton High, Marquette Catholic and Mississippi Valley Christian School and home schooled students.

Sarah Whitney, the first place winner, advanced to the district competition, which will be held on January 11 in Litchfield. Whitney's interpretation of the subject, "Freedom's Obligation," focused on patriotism, respect and the obligation to be thankful.

"I finally decided on doing it on patriotism, respect and thankfulness because I wanted to bring attention to the irony that we really didn't think about 'freedom's obligation' until after 9/11," said Whitney.

To third place winner, Jody Cox, "freedom's obligation" meant something totally different. As the other girls, Cox thought about many possibilities, but the one that stuck out most in her head was the freedom that Americans have to play sports. When she looks at the flag before her games and the National Anthem plays, Cox described how her heart becomes heavy and filled with emotion. She remembers all of the veterans who fought for this country in order that the future generations could have freedom of all kinds.

"When I hear the words, 'freedom's obligation,' it immediately reminds me of the way I feel before every volleyball and softball game," said Cox.

"I owe every game I play and every goal I reach to the fighters for freedom. We as Americans should always stand up for the concept of freedom, and I pray for those who try to stand in the way," explained Cox.

Camp Success remains successful

Keegan Thompson

Rise and Shine; seven a.m. in the morning the Camp Success participants get out of their beds to start getting ready for their day. Friday night to Sunday afternoon a group of AHS students attend an overnight camp focused on mental wellness and personal goals once every year.

Along with students from many other area schools, their day starts with breakfast, energizers (dances and gestures made to accompany a song or chant), then on to the day's motivational and informational speakers along with activities.

Camp Success was founded in 1986. This camp is now headed by David Goins, Kristin Kennet, and Amy Yeager, who run it with an iron rule and sensitive touch. Sade Vanzant said, "The camp is great. They run it efficiently but it is also fun."

The goal of this camp is to make its participants feel better about themselves and their lives after they have left on Sunday. Christian Gully says, "Camp was great. I learned a lot."

Along with the satisfaction, Camp Success also focused on personal goals. For example, opening up your true self and getting to know others and yourself despite differences. Contact someone in the counseling office to check it out for next year.

THE BRIDAL SUITE
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Entertainment

The Producers scams its way to St. Louis

Carl McMullen, Entertainment Editor

Just in time for the holiday season, the Fabulous Fox Theatre and US Bank welcome from Broadway the Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan musical *The Producers,* winner of 12 Tony Awards this year. This rousing farce based on the Oscar-winning 1968 movie opened on December 10 and continues through December 28.

The tale begins with the introduction of bad-luck producer Max Bialystock, played by Lewis J. Stadler. He has reached his wits end after another financial failure on stage and needs to resurrect his career in the business. Max vows to regain his title as "The King of Broadway."

The desperate producer hires Leo Bloom, an eccentric accountant played by Don Stephenson, to handle his financial burden. The adventure begins when Bloom informs Bialystock that a producer has the opportunity to make more money with a flop than a hit. This insight catches the ear of Max, and Leo continues by adding that one could raise a million dollars, spend a fraction of it on the play, and walk away with a large profit.

Delighted by this revelation, Max persuades Bloom to partner with him and form a new business, "Bialystock & Bloom, Theatrical Producers." From there, the two set out to find the worst play ever written; one that would guarantee to flop in a night. They land on a play written by neo-Nazi Franz Liebkind titled "Springtime for Hitler, a Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva in Berchtesgaden."

Lienkind delights in the interest of Leo and Max, and he even leads them in a rousing version of Hitler's favorite song, "Der Guten Tag Hop-Clop." Franz graciously signs a contract with the two producers, and the script begins its transformation. After the successful search of finding a script, Max and Leo set out to find a director as horrible as the script itself.

The two producers land on a highly disregarded Broadway director by the name of Roger de Bris. After a little convincing, de Bris agrees to direct the script of "Springtime for Hitler."

With a guaranteed failure in their pockets, the two producers set out to raise a large sum of money by talking up old ladies. The twist of the story arrives on opening night of the production. Max and Leo are shocked to discover that "Springtime for Hitler" opens with rave reviews from critics and the crowd alike. The rest of the story revolves around the arrest of the two men, and their eventual redemption and return to glory.

The original production of *The Producers*, directed by five-time Tony winner Susan Stroman, opened at the St. James Theatre in April 2001 to much critical acclaim. Actors Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick were cast as the original stars of the show. In response to the many sellout shows on Broadway, the musical was adapted financially for off-Broadway shows.

Reviews of the show have been numerous and extremely complementary. US Today wrote, "Mel Brooks has put the comedy back into musical comedy. (*The Producers*) is the funniest, most fearlessly irreverent thing ever seen on stage." So for a good show and a couple laughs, *The Producers* at the Fox is a good bet for holiday entertainment.

Shows are at 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and 7:30 p.m. Sunday nights. Dec. 24 and 26 will have shows at 2 p.m. Tickets are currently available for all shows by telephone or Metrotix. For information and ticket availability, the Fox Theatre may be reached at 314-534-1111.

Man gets more than dinner

Megan Williams, reporter

Another AHS production is underway and much work is being done for the big hit. The play is titled "The Man Who Came to Dinner." It starts when a famous radio celebrity goes to Ohio to eat dinner with a local middle-class family. The man, Sheridan Whiteside, played by Adam Tucker, breaks his hip and is forced to stay with the family. Mr. Whiteside has a great personality and will make everyone in the audience laugh.

Many people tried out for the play. It was one of the biggest outcomes the school has had in a very long time.

"There were so many people who came out for auditions. It was very hard to cast the show. We have a lot of new people who are going to be on stage for the first time. I hope people who are interested in getting involved will come out and join a backstage crew," said Miss Keller, theater and communicating teacher.

The cast has been practicing Monday through Friday from 3-5 PM. The hard work will pay off on January 24 and 25 at 8 P.M.

Christmas in the city

Sarah Gill

"Frosty the snowman was a jolly happy soul." This is Alton's December them this year. There is more than enough Christmas cheer planned for December.

There are many festivities planned for Saturdays in December. There will be Christmas puppet shows by Puppet Ministries from 1-2 PM and holiday caroling in Lincoln Douglas Square. Be sure not to miss the inexpensive pony and sleigh rides from 1-4 PM.

A popular activity around Christmas time in Alton is the Holiday Candlelight Home Tour on December 8. The community can tour some of the most beautifully decorated homes. The tour consists of seven homes. There are five in Alton and two in Godfrey.

We can't forget Rock Spring Park's Christmas lights. Take a drive through the park for $7 and see thousands of beautiful Christmas lights. The park is currently open and will run through December 29.

For something to do on the weekends, head to downtown Alton in December. There will always be something going on.

Treasure planet not such a treasure

Amy Stabell, backpage editor

Disney's *Treasure Planet* debuted in theaters on November 28. The animated feature is a futuristic twist on the book Treasuer Island by Robert Louis Stevenson. In the film, Jim Hawkins, the protagonist, voiced by Joeseph Gordon Levitt, travels through space in search of a long buried treasure.

There are many parallels between the book and the movie. Jim and John Silver's relationship is the same. One scene in the movie transforms the book's "storm at sea" to the creation of a black hole. The choice of animation is dead on. The styles give the movie a neo-classical aspect.

John Silver is voiced by Brian Murry. In a Disney interview he said, "This was a dream job for me... I read the book Treasure Island when I was eight years old and it's one of my favorite books of all time."

Though the animation is fantastic, Treasure Planet is not one of Disney's finest. Directors/ screen play writers Ron Clements and Jon Musker sell out to Disney's tradition. The romance between Captain Amelia, voiced by Emma Thompson, and Doctor Doppler, voiced by David Hyde Pierce, has no relevance to the plot, is underdeveloped. and can be considered downright corny.

Martin Short does a fantastic job as B.E.N. His comc relief, however, is introduced too late in the film and the high drama in the plot causes it to drag. A minor character, Morph, provides a small lift to his trouble spot. Disney's reputation for incorporating sophisticated humor along with the juvenile is betrayed.

PHISH MAKES BIG COMEBACK

Austin Luster

Phish's return to the jam band scene has surprised many not only with a New Year's Eve concert followed by a three day show in Virginia , but a new full blown album that will send the band on tour next year.

The new album titled "Round Room" was thrown togethor during rehearsals for the New Year's Eve Concerts. The album was recorded at lead singer Tre Anastasio's studio and was produced by the band in Vermont. "Round Room" is to be released in stores on December 10th and is also available to be pre-ordered on Phish's home page.

The new album has sprung the band into taking a tour for the new record year, starting in late February along the West Coast. Twelve dates have been posted for the shows.

Christmas time and San

December

Flying reindeer may not be myth after all

Sarahjay Whitney, co-editor and cover story editor

As mature teenagers, the last thing that's on any of our minds come Christmas time, is the excitement of telling Santa what we want for Christmas. If anything, we're more interested in raiding the nooks and crannies of our attics for our hidden Christmas presents, purchased quite normally at the friendly neighborhood mall. However, how would our perceptions change if we were presented with facts that prove reindeer can and do fly?

Robert Sullivan, a senior editor of Time magazine, has done just this, proven that reindeer can fly in his 1996 book Flight of the Reindeer. Not just any reindeer can fly. While most kinds can leap upwards of 250 yards, only the Peary caribou can lift off and gain altitude. Reindeer and caribou are essentially the same with the exception that the term "reindeer" is used when the deer has been raised by a breeder.

Peary caribou or *Rangifer tarnadus pearyi* are the smallest of the deer family. They generally average between three feet shoulder height and weigh 200 lbs compared to the Lapland reindeer, the deer normally associated with Santa's team, who stands four feet tall shoulder height and weigh 400 lbs. The Peary Caribou lives the farthest into the Arctic Circle. Their coat is pure white, to ensure camouflage and to provide warmth in the Arctic temperatures.

But still, how do they fly?

In his book, Sullivan quotes Bil Gilbert a naturalist from Pennsylvania who specializes on the Arctic. 'Gilbert says, "Physically, the two most important aspects of a flier are the hooves and the antlers."

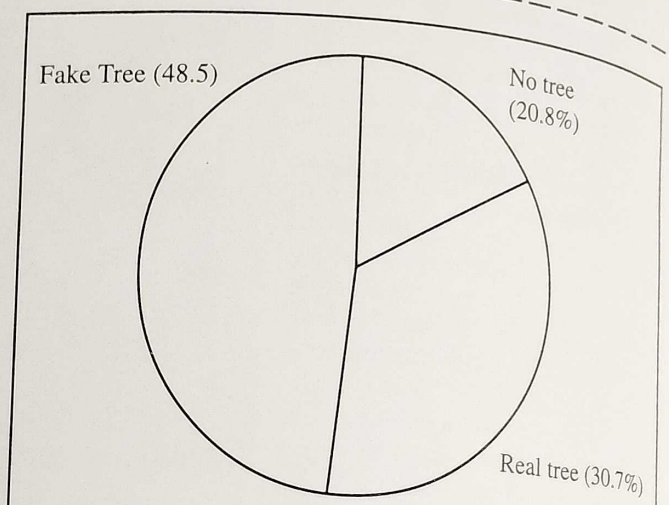
He then goes on to explain how all reindeer have splay-hooves, which create a larger surface area and are perfect for creating thrust. The Peary Caribou's hoof size would be equivalent to you or me having a fifty shoe size.

The next important essential for flying is the Peary's antlers. The antlers cause air to rush over them, creating lift. This is called Bernoulli's principal.

Gilbert goes on to say that only a Peary with the perfect rack will be able to actually achieve lift off and easily achieve roughly 800 miles an hour. He adds, "Santa's team would have liftoff power equivalent to several jet planes--and it would be about a hundredth the size of a Boeing 747."

Flight of the Reindeer includes other convincing details of Santa's existence, such as an interview of Will Steger, the only man to visit Santa's village, interviews with Santa's Helpers, and much, much more. This book is available at the Hayner Main Library downtown Alton or you can buy it on-line for $13 or $25, depending on if you catch a sale.

Just in case you're still not convinced, The Library of Congress classified Flight of the Reindeer in the nonfiction section.



** What kind of trees do Americans buy? In 2002 30.7% of United State household had a real tree, 4.5% had a fake tree, and 20.8% had no tree. Courtousy of www.urbanest.uiuc.edu*

St. Nick drops bags of gold in girls' stocking

Mandy Schwartzkopf

The Santa Claus that Americans think of when Christmas comes to mind originated from the Dutch's Saint Nicolas. He was born in Lycia, Anatolia, a province on the southwest coast of Turkey in 245 AD, and he died in 350 AD.

When St. Nick was young, his father died, leaving him a vast fortune. Instead of spending the money on himself, he started giving the money to the needy, especially children. He performed various miracles, all realted to gift giving.

One day, while waking through a poor part of Lycia he overheard a poor father and his daughters discussing the matter of the girls' dowries. The father was once a nobleman, having fallen upon hard times, his three daughters were all beautiful and intelligent, however their was no chance of marraige since their father could not pay their dowries.

The next night, St. Nicholas threw a sack of gold through a window of the nobleman's run down castle. She was soon sucessfully married.

Later, when it was time for the second daughter to be married, St. Nicholas once again visited the old castle during the night, leaving a sack of gold behind for the second daughter's dowry.

Finally, the third daughter was at an age to be married. Except this time, the nobleman in hopes of catching St. Nick locked the castle windows. Not to be discovered, St. Nick climbed up the roof and dropped the bag down the chimmey. The next morning, the third daughter found the bag of gold in her stocking, which she had hung up to dry the night before by the fireplace.

Christmas tree facts

*Other types of trees such as cherry and hawthorns were used as Christmas trees in the past.
*There are over 500 Christmas tree growers in Illinois.
*Real Christmas trees are involved in less that one-tenth of one percent of residential fires and only when ignited by some external ignition sources.
*The value of all Christmas trees harvested in 2001 was $360 million.
* 32.4 million families purchased a real tree in 1998.
*More thab 330,000 real Christmas trees are sold via e-commerce or catalogs.
* An acre of Christmas trees provides for the daily oxygen requirements of 18 people.
Courtsey of www.urbanext.uiuc.edu

Sparkling ornaments hang in history

Brandy Robinson, reporter and Sarahjay Whitney, coverstory editor

It's Christmas morning! You bolt wide awake. It's 6:30 in the morning, and you're already stumbling excitedly downstairs towards the Christmas tree. What you find however is totally bizarre. Instead of your presents placed underneath the Christmas tree they are each tied to a different branch. The weight has the poor tree doubled over on its side. This wouldn't be such a strange spectacle to you, if you lived roughly 100 years ago, because back then people did actually tie their presents to the tree. It hasn't been until recently when presents, like Play Station 2's, snowboards, and stereo systems, weighed too much that they came to be placed underneath the tree.

Even though the Christmas tree practice started in 1510, it wasn't until one hundred years later that people started to decorate their Christmas trees.

Tinsel was born by a specialized machine in Germany in 1610. At first the Germans made tinsel out of silver, but as pretty as it looked in the candle light it tarnished in the candle smoke. Attempts were made to create a silver alloy by mixing lead and tin, but the resulting tinsel would break under its own weight.

Housewives made another one of history's favorite ornaments. Hand stitched stars, snowflakes, and other holiday related shapes. These croquetted decorations would often contain secret pockets where sugared plums and other goodies would be stashed.

Christmas trees' roots spread through time

Brandy Robinson, reporter

Every year, millions of Christmas trees grace the living rooms of hundreds of American families. Glistening ornaments, blinking lights, and twinkling tensil decorate the homely trees. Why do we as Americans spend millions of dollars and tons of time on selecting that perfect tree? Where did this tradition come from?

German immigrants were the first to bring the Christmas tree tradition the the US. The first recorded decorated tree was in Riga, Latvia in 1510. During December, German towns set up Christmas markets. These markets dealt with gifts, foods, practical things to help with dinners, wax ornaments and of course, fir trees.

In the early 7th century a monk traveled to Germany to spread the word of God. To help Christianize the Germans, he used the triangular shape of the fir tree as a symbol of the Holy Trinity. By the twelfth century in Central Europe the Christmas tree was being hung upside-down from ceilings as a sign of Christianity.

In 1846, Queen Victoria and her German Prince, Albert, were shown posed in the London news standing in front of a Christmas tree with their children. Victoria was loyal and loved by her subjects, so the trend spread like wildfire--even into the East Coast American Colonies.

Queen Victoria set the style called "High Victorian Trees." The trees were packed with toys, tinsel, and garland. Basically, they were over-decorated, until the tree limbs were dropping under all of its decorations' weight. After Victoria's death, her Christmas tree style died with her, giving way to color schemed trees and Oriental or Egyptian trees as the new style.

The British tree of the twentieth century was the goose feather tree. It was small, artificial, and sat on most table tops. Meanwhile, in America the Addis Brush company made the first brush tree. The trees' advantages over the German goose feather idea was that it could hold heavier decorations.

By the mid-1960s the silver aluminium tree was the new wave. It had a revolving colored light source which sat under the tree's base. The light filtered through the branches and made the tree glow. And what was even better-- No decorations were needed.

Funk bomb dropped at dance, roof raised

Nearly one hundred injured, groovy

Joe Hilgard, humor editor and champion domino-stacker

On the night of December 14, MC Shiggety Schwa detonated a high-yield funk-fueled explosive device, or "funk bomb," at the AHS Holiday Dance, raising the roof considerably. Some witnesses report the roof as being completely torn off the building.

The funk yield was estimated at 90 groovatons of explosive force. Neighbors for miles around called the police to complain about the colossal levels of bass reverb caused by the bomb's detonation.

Dozens of students were sent to Alton Memorial Hospital to be treated for flash burns and dehydration.

"Oh my God," commented the meatwagon driver. The new guy was unavailable for comment, as he was huddled in the corner, puking his guts out.

Students that couldn't immediately evacuate the dance were subjected to several straight hours of unrelenting funk. Almost all suffered undetectable brain damage and a curious phobia of strobe lights.

The use of funk as a weapon has been long considered an atrocity in the national view. The first funk bomb, dropped by Kid Shazam in 1972, killed hundreds and leveled several blocks. Authorities say that, with the addition of a fog machine and strobe lights, MC Schwa's bomb could have equaled or surpassed this destruction.

"My funk," MC Shiggety Schwa explained, "cannot be imitated." Lab analysis shows that Schwa's funk contains extremely harmful substances such as fat beats, mad skills, crazy scratch, and a tight groove.

"As we speak, I am busily mixing more powerful and contagious breeds of funk. This stuff is more toxic than Pepsi Blue," said Schwa in a radio report from his secret lair.

Authorities are looking for this man in connection with last Saturday's funk-bombing. Shiggety Schwa has been a suspected funkbombadier for several years, but unpopular school official "The Man" has never managed to apprehend him.

"Indeed, I am the greatest funkbombadier ever," he added.

"I feel that we must piteously beg MC Shiggety Schwa to spare our lives," said Harvey McMonkensprank, an AHS senior and my imaginary friend. "We could always try virgin sacrifice."

"Don't quote me on that," he added.

Alton adopts democracy in school dances

Joe Hilgard, humor editor and champion domino-stacker

Student Activities Board passed a unanimous decision last Friday to change the title of Snow King to Snow President.

"I commend the Student Activities Board on their decision," said Mr. Trapani. "At last we have thrown off the shackles of monarchy and brought power to the common man."

The new democratic system is a sweeping change from the old monarchy. Dance winners are now considered to be chosen by the will of the people, as opposed to the old feudalistic method, which considered winners chosen by the will of God.

All other dance titles made similar changes, as well. Prince/Princess has become Secretary of State, Duke/Duchess has become House Majority Leader, and Lord/Lady has become Governor of Texas.

As such, the new Snow Presidents/Secretaries of State/House Majority Leaders/Governors of Texas face sweeping new limitations to their powers. Their actions cannot violate the new rights of students, and they will be held to the law in the case of crime.

Perhaps the most significant change is the distribution of power to the Student Senate. The Presidents cannot declare war on other schools without the consent of a majority in the Student Senate.

"I watched my friends die face-down in the muck in the Forty-Year War against O'Fallon," said a decrepit old senior. "We had to fight because the King's fancy car got keyed. Thousands of students died for King Michael II's Mustang."

JBJ is currently in the process of redevelopment. Under the prior government, JBJ was used as a stable for knights' warhorses. Since privileged feudalistic titles such as "knight" are now defunct, JBJ is being changed to a tradehouse, where students can learn valuable skills such as cooping, blacksmithing, brickmaking, and bean-counting.

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Bush Administration looks to the future

by Jeff McDonald

This week, President Bush announced the creation of a new cabinet position, Secretary of Future Affairs. He appointed Miss Cleo, the allegedly Jamaican clairvoyant spokeswoman for the now defunct Psychic Readers Network, to the new position.

"The one thing our administration was missing was an effective method to avoid screw-ups," Bush stated at a recent press conference. "This new addition to our staff will greatly aid in the development of both our national and world strategery."

The Bush team had faced setbacks in the past with the failure of similar policymaking programs. "The Oujia Board Initiative was met with a lot of resistance in Congress, and sometimes its hard to reach Dad when he's out golfing," Bush said.

Bush had also voiced his disappointment when he discovered that his National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, had no supernatural powers. "With a name like that," he said, "I expected her to at least know some voodoo spells."

When reached for comment, Secretary Cleo reaffirmed the President's confidence. "Dis be a great bit a luck for Miss Cleo," she stated, "Seein' as she be gettin' sued at de moment."

However, the new appointment has drawn some criticism from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. "I think that pancake lady took my wallet," he said.

Due to legal actions pending against her, Secretary Cleo has had to leave Washington on numerous occasions, causing the President to express his annoyance. "Every time we have a Cabinet meeting, she has to be put on speakerphone, and its costing the American taxpayers $4.99 a minute!"

Above: "This appointment is a tremendous honor for the great State of Jamaica," President Bush announced.
Below: The leader of the free world is amazed when Miss Cleo correctly guesses what he had for lunch.

The rise and fall of Michael Jackson's nose

by Shawn Emily

Michael Jackson is back in the news. I'm not talking about his attempt to impersonate Rafiki (the baboon from The Lion King) by dangling his baby (It's convenient that Mom is never around) over a balcony in Berlin. I'm speaking of an affliction the likes of which the world hasn't seen since, MAYBE, the Black Death.

His nose is flaking.

The tip of his nose, ravaged by years of invasive rhinoplasty (a nose job for the common folk), has begun to peel, revealing raw meat, and what appears to be Silly Putty, underneath. This is a sad situation, unless of course you don't like Michael Jackson, at which point it becomes absolutely disgusting.

To see how far Michael Jackson has fallen, realize this: His record sales have fallen with every nose job. His nose was normal when Thriller came out. Now look at it. It's a triangle of plastic and flesh, with two drill holes for nostrils. His album, released early this year (yes, he released an album, as if you noticed), went nowhere quick, fast, and in a hurry.

I have definite issues with his plastic surgeon(s).

Will there ever be a time when, if he comes to the office, they'll say no? Probably not, but he and they have to be stopped. The man is falling apart.

An issue of interest is his pigmentation "disease". He has what I call "cloroxitis". It is amazing, yet macabre, to see the metamorphosis of Michael from a virile black man to a decaying, decrepit white woman. Why is he so afraid of aging? It's normal, and it happens to everyone.

Early this week (November 19), Jackson took his children to the Berlin Zoo. The trip was only marred by the children not being able to see any animals due to the combination of a cadre of black umbrellas surrounding the party, and the heavy veils put on the children's heads.

Jackson put these veils on his children out of fear of kidnapping, as if anyone could get to them at this point. Michael is so high-strung, he stops, drops, and rolls when he hears a fire alarm, much less when it comes to security. On the footage of the family field trip to the zoo, I'll go to the grave swearing I saw a man in an all-black suit patrolling the skies with a rocket launcher!

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Redbirds skate to victory

Blake Schrumpf, sports editor

The Alton High Hockey team is off to a great start. The boys started their season with two tough games against Granite City and Edwardsville. The teams were tied at the end of each game.

Although the Redbirds started off with two ties they did not give up. The team went on to win their next 4 games.

Among the victories was the city championship game between Marquette and Alton High. Alton High skaters dominated the game and proved they have what it takes to win.

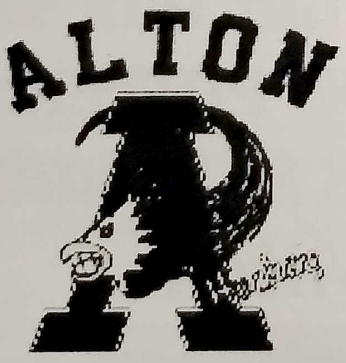
The hockey team has been constantly working to make their season very successful. They feel they have the potential and they have already proved it.

"No one is standing in our way to win first place this season," said junior Nick Whittman.

"We have played the tougher teams in our division and we know we can beat them," said Dan Brynildsen.

Senior Ryan Theen is off to a wonderful season. He has been a huge contributor to the success the team is having. Theen scored a hat trick in the game against Collinsville and is currently the leading scorer with 7 goals.

"I hope we keep playing with the intensity and skill we have been displaying so far. It's exciting to actually have a team that is capable of going very far. One of the wonderful things about our team is our skill. Everyone is contributing to the amazing number of goals scored," said Junior Tom Lester.



Redbird Hockey Stats						
Games	Wins	Losses	Ties	Points	Goals for	Goals against
6	4	0	2	10	24	8

Rams looking for comeback

Daniel Hinkle

The St. Louis Rams are looking for a strong finish after their horrendous 0 and 5 start. The Rams fought their way back with five straight wins. They started winning even with injuries to key players.

They struggled early after the winless preseason. They were struggling on both sides of the football. Quarterback Kurt Warner was not passing well and the receivers were not catching easy passes. Everyone was not playing well.

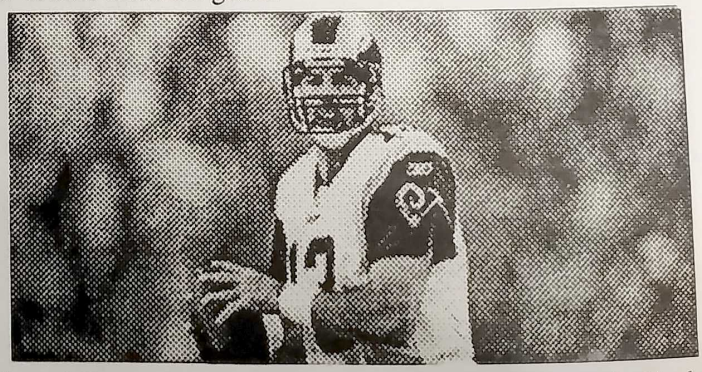
They suffered a couple of devastating injuries early in the year. The big injury came to Warner, who broke his finger and had to miss six weeks. Pro Bowl Cornerback Anease Williams broke his leg and is out for the season. They just could not get a break they needed.

The team started to look like the rams from the last few years once they were lifted up by inspirational words from wide receiver Tory Holt after their loss against their division rivals the San Francisco 49ers. Holt told the team that they weren't having fun anymore and that they needed to start having fun. The rams did that the next week by delivering the 5-0 Oakland Raiders their first loss.

In the game against the Raiders, the Rams started third string quarterback Marc Bulger. Bulger came out of nowhere to have a great game. Marshall Faulk picked up the pieces from the Rams' early struggles by rushing for over 100 yards. The Rams seemed to look like they were getting back on track.

Faulk followed up his 100-yard performance with two more 100-yard games. The Rams won both of those games. The next week Faulk got hurt forcing Bluger to take charge. He had two huge games showing he can win with his arm by throwing for over 300 yards in both games leading the Rams to victory.

The next week Warner was back and playing well. He threw for 300 yards and 2 touchdowns, but the Rams still lost 20-17 when they fumbled on the Redskins' 6 yard line with 10 seconds left. It cost them the game.



Rams' Quarterback Kurt Warner looks to throw vs. the Eagles

Photo courtesy of www.stlouisrams.com

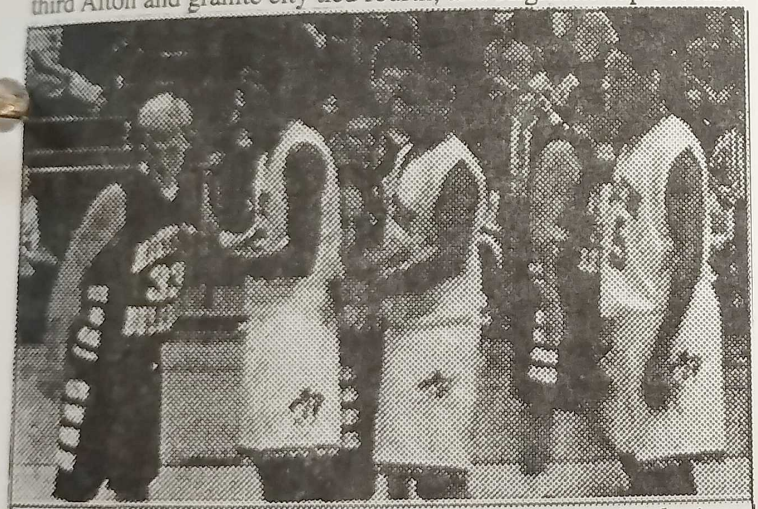
A classical tournament tips off Alton season

Anthony Gater, senior editor

Alton High fans are very suppourtive of all their sports, but as soon as the football get deflated and the jump shots start flying, a whole new spirit comes out of the school. For about seven years now, the West Gym has been the place to be during the Thanksgiving holiday for all resident in the Riverbend area to come watch the "tipoff" of another exciting Redbird basketball season.

Basketball powerhouses from all over the state participate in The Alton Tipoff Classic. The Tipoff Classic used to be the Alton Riverbend Classic, which was a shared tournament alternated between Wood River and Alton High. Wood River decided the couldn't handle the competion and pulled out, and Alton sololy took sole control of the tournament.

This year's tournament consisted of Springfield Southeast, Cahokia, Jerseyville, Highland, Granite City, and the hosting Alton Redbirds. Southeast, who is currently ranked 4th in Class AA, won the tournament but had to fight hard to stay undefeated. and win the tournament. Cahioka finsished second, Jerseyville finsihed third Alton and granite city tied fourth, and Highland tap out last.



Kris Martin, Mark goins, and Donald Jackson a waits the in bound pass in Redbirds big win in the tournament.

No time for Rebuilding for seniors in Alton

by Anthony Gater, senior editor

After a disapointing regular season and the loss of several key players several predictions for the Alton High Redbirds have been a big rebuilding season for the birds. "I am a senior and I have no time for rebuilding," says star point guard Brandon Patterson. The redbirds played tough in the Alton Tipoff classic though they did not win the tournament Coach Mike Brey mixed up the lineup to perfection before the regular season opener. The redbirds are flying confident with the changes and are very excited about this season. "I have had a few injuries that may have set me back a

It's a Long road to state

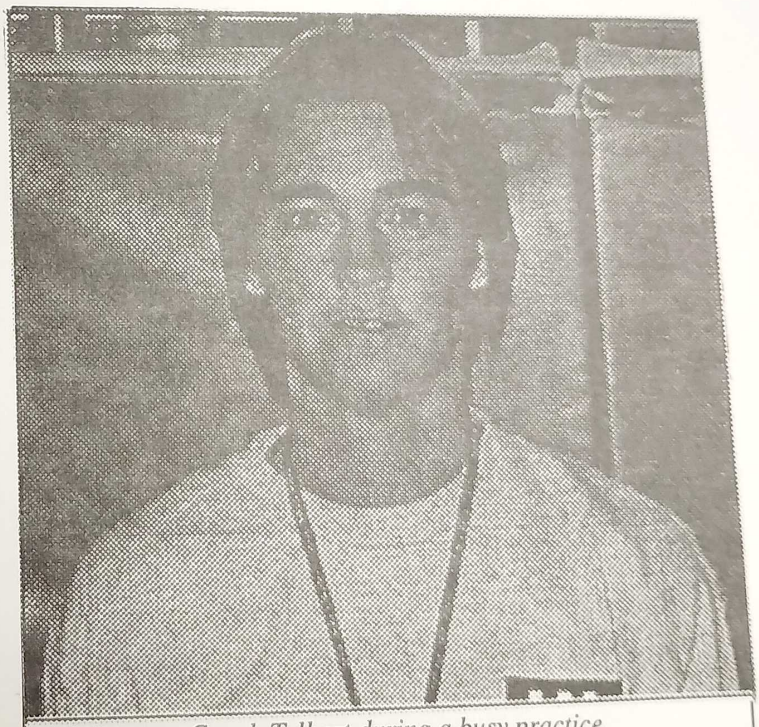
Anthony Gater, senior editor

This year Alton high girl's Basketball team has a new coach and a new mission. Coach Talbert is the new coach and the mission is girls state tournament in Bloomington,Il.

"Winnig use to be our only goal but we're shooting for bigger and better things this year", says senior Joanna Bratton. Though the Lady Redbirds Know they have a tough road ahead of them they feel they have a ligitmit shot at the big dance with the senior led team.

The team consits of killer point guard Joanne Bratton,hot hand shoting guard MicheleMccrady,fiesty weakside guard Danielle Mccrady,the biggest big man Consuela Barham, and last but not least the spark plug sixthman Shawanna Burgess.

The Lady redbirds know not anyone can get to the the tournament without hard work. Coach Talbert says, "I think it would be a life long goal and a dream for high school players,but it is very possible."



Coach Talbert during a busy practice

Girl's Home Games

12/16/02 vs O'Fallon 7:30
1/6/03 vs Collinsville 7:30
1/9/03 vs Belleville East 7:30
1/14/03 vs Edwardsville 7:30
1/17/03 vs East St.Louis 7:30
2/7/03 vs Belleville West 7:30
2/10/03 vs Granite City 7:30

Amy's Antics

RBW's website picks

Amy Stabell, backpage editor

http://Homestarrunner.com~ This website contains several computer animated cartoons. Prepare to fall out of your chair laughing! **Suggested pattern of links:**First, go to the "first time here" link. (in upper right hand corner of homepage) Next, go to the Strongbad emails. Then, go to Marzipan's answering machine. Then roam the site however you want, but be sure to watch the cartoon "Where is the Cheat?"

http://www.theonion.com~ Weekly lampoon articles on current events.

http://www.thespark.com~ This site is a compilation of humor articles, tests and homework help. Sparknotes provide helpful study guides complete with pretests.

http://www.lyrics.com~ This website has an alphabetical listing of artists. First select and artist, then the C.D. of your choice, then the song.

http://www.thesmokinggun.com~ Want to find dirt on anyone from the President to the Pope go to this site and read the archives. It contains hilarious articles that are, unfortunately, all factual. The article on McDonald's fattening food is a classic.

http://www.statsonline.com~ Find statistics for highschool sports on this site.

http://www.indb.com~ Download movies and music through this site.

http://www.collegeboard.com~ Sign up for the SAT online and forget dealing with their confusing booklet. Pre-test materials and study help is also availible.

http://www.digitalcity.com~ Need something to do? This site is an entertainment search engine. Type in your zipcode and you'll find concert dates and cultural events happening in your area.

http://elfwood.com~ Need a creative outlet? Send in your poetry and artwork to this online gallery and view others work.

http://www.theprincetonreview.com~ Study for your entrence exams here.

http://www.gurl.com~ High school is tough for us girls! Get some free advice on life here.

http://www.axegaming.tk and **http://www.altonxboxelite.tk**~ This site contains information on LAN parties in the area. It is run by a group of Alton high students. (see the ad in the paper)

Capricorn traits

Capricorn is the astrological sign of those whose birthdays fall between December 22 and January 20. Capricorns are practical, prudent, ambitious, disciplined, patient, careful, humorous and reserved. They can also be pessimistic, fatalistic, miserable and grudging.

for more information visit http://www.astrology-online.com/persn.html

RedBird random award of the month

Best Grandpa Car

Winner: Amber Evans, Senior

Foreign Santas

courtesy of The Christmas Book Of Lists written by Elizabeth Haynie (page 46)

1. Austria- Krampus
2. Belgium- Saint Nicholas
3. Brazil- Papa Noel
4. Bulgaria- Grandfather Koleda
5. Chile- Viejo Pascuero (Old Man Christmas)
6. Costa RIca- Christ Child
7. England- Father Christmas
8. Finland- Father Christmas
9. Germany- Christkind Angel
10. Guatemala- Christ Child
11. Holland- Sinter Klaas
12. Hungary- Mikulas
13. Italy- Befana or Babbo Natale
14. Japan- Hoteiosho

Wordfind

E	D	C	H	D	O	K	I	J	Y	L	L	O	H	M
W	S	A	Y	E	P	L	O	F	A	M	I	L	Y	I
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Y	L	O	H	M	J	U	R	E	E	D	N	I	E	R

Sugar Plums
Mistletoe
Star
Green
Holly
Eggnog
Santa
Holy
Snowman
Cookies
Family
Bell
Yuletide
Reindeer
Red
Present
Happy
Tinsel